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RL:0449

SB 2203-82 RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Ecology, Environmental and Recreation
Public Hearing - 23 February 1982

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HB 2164 would amend HRS Chapter 341 relating to Environmental Quality Control so as to integrate completely in the Department of Health the Office of Environmental Quality Control which is now placed in the Department for administrative purposes only. This statement on the bill has been submitted for review to the Legislative Subcommittee of the Environmental Center of the University of Hawaii. However, it does not represent an institutional position of the University.

Assuming the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC) is to remain in the Department of Health (DOH), the answer to the question whether its placement there should be for administrative purposes alone or whether it should become an integral part of the DOH depends upon the scope of responsibilities now intended for the OEQC. It was originally intended to advise the Governor and to provide interdepartmental coordination in environmental matters. We provided this committee, at its hearing on 13 November 1981, with a review of the background and statutory provisions for the OEQC, the Environmental Council and the Environmental Quality Commission (RG:0046), and with comments on suggested changes in the status of the OEQC and Council (RL:0442). As we pointed out then, the responsibilities given to the OEQC cannot be met satisfactorily if the OEQC is subjugated to departmental policy by becoming integrated in the DOH.

If the OEQC were to be integrated in the DOH, then it would be appropriate, as provided in HB 2164, to abolish the position of the Director of Environmental Quality Control, to make the OEQC advisory to the Director of Health rather than the Governor, to replace the Director of Environmental Quality Control as ex-officio member of the Environmental Quality Commission by the Director of Health, and to place the Environmental Council in the DOH. However, as pointed out in the earlier review, whether the original responsibilities of the OEQC still need to be met depends primarily on the present importance of the environmental concerns that led to its establishment. If this concern is now so unimportant as to make continued exercise of these responsibilities unnecessary, it would seem to appropriate simply to abolish OEQC and the Environmental Council rather than to integrate them in the DOH.